
Editorial: Empowering consumers in strategic marketing decisions

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Marketing in the 21st century has empowered consumers to guide the strategies of most business firms. However, most firms have been sluggish in realising the fact that consumers have the potential to drive the market dynamics in emerging markets. Consequently, the driving factors for strategic decision making among the marketing firms has been shifted to local competitors who know how consumers think, what they need, and how they buy (D'Andrea et al., 2010). Managers in increasing globalisation and competitive market environment recognise the advantage of consumer knowledge. Hence, firms with potential to sustain the market competition and become market leaders should foster teams for co-creating products, services, and marketing strategies in association with consumers. Multinational companies form such co-creation communities for a variety of reasons including to develop socio-professional networks with peers, to respond to shifts in market behaviour, and to meet new challenges within the company (Wenger and Snyder, 2000).

Most of the consumer products and services firms are focusing of consumer education through various community programs and social networks. Firms involved in co-creating strategy options, which allows consumers make choices, are better placed in market against competitors. In order to actualise this potential, firms invest resources in offering consumer education and develop self-efficacy, capacity for effective advocacy, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Firms delivering services influence the degree of quality of services in references to the education of consumers, skills, and cognitive abilities toward reviewing the efficiency of services. Thus, services marketing firms try to build co-shopping and co-reviewing with customers of different levels of education (Sabrina, 2005).

Customer knowledge is positively associated with the market expertise on the products and services offered by the competing firms. However, it has been observed that where there is a significant amount of research on customer knowledge and expertise, there is relatively less understanding of how the convergence of their knowledge with marketing decision of firms determines the competitive posture of the firm, its market share, and perceived value and satisfaction of consumers (Bell and Eisingerich, 2007). In other words, consumers, firms, and market competition are bonded today and in this chain consumer plays the key role in determining the performance of the firm in a given marketplace. Hence, multinational firms intending to develop their customer-centric posture must have thorough understanding of consumers in reference to their multiple roles as communicators and consumers. Empowering consumers and enhancing their ability to consume by integrating them into the value delivery system would make the companies to stay consumer friendly on one hand and to sustain the market competition on the other. Consumers may also be involved in designing the distribution planning and replenishment strategies of organic firms that grow on the base of consumer knowledge (Craig and Douglas, 2011).

Empowering consumers in the process of strategic marketing decisions integrates the market philosophies of modern liberalism with the conventional individualism. Marketing firms need to refine and re-evaluate consumer expectations and their strategy orientations to enhance the customer value. The purpose and effect of such marketing orientations are to increase consumers' purchasing satisfactions through consumer empowerment as it has a sustainable beneficial effect in both the short and long-term business (Wright et al., 2006).

In this issue of the journal, there are four papers that address the issues of consumer knowledge, marketing capabilities of firms, consumer choice, and collective self-esteem and interpersonal influence among consumers. All papers discuss consumer centric research propositions and attempt to establish the role of consumers in managing marketing decisions in a competitive marketplace. I hope the anthology of research papers in this issue will enrich the existing literature on the topic and stimulate future research.

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